

DOING AND KNOWING

JOHN 7:14-18

For several weeks now I have been preaching to you about discipleship. I have tried to make the point obvious to you that a disciple is not one who simply knows Jesus, but one who knows Him as Lord.

That means the Christian is one who has surrendered everything – fame, family, finances, and the favors of life – for the sake of following and serving Christ and loving others – all for the glory of God.

In the process of studying for these sermons, I read this scripture which is our text for today. I am still amazed at how many times I can read the same text and have it say something new to me each time.

This text seemed to leap off the page when I read it a couple of weeks ago, and I want to share its meaning with you today.

This text says that a disciple of Jesus will recognize that nothing that he has to work with or work for has anything to do with himself, but that it all belongs to God, comes from God, and will one day be returned to God.

The true disciple will have a heart for...

- God's Doctrine
- God's Desire
- God's Delight

I. God's Doctrine (v. 16)

In John 7, Jesus had traveled from Galilee to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Booths. It was sometime around the month of October. The harvest was in and the weather had begun to cool down, making the long journey much more pleasant.

Once He reached the city, Jesus went to the Temple, as was His custom on every visit, and began to teach to the people there.

After He had taught for some time, the Jewish authorities began to be concerned about the things that Jesus was teaching. Here is this rugged man from Galilee, as evidenced by the northern accent, and the dress which indicates that He does not belong to any family of note.

They marveled at His teaching and questioned the authority by which He taught these things.

The rabbis, or teachers, of the day would base their teaching on the Pentateuch, the Torah, or the Mishna. They would never think of speaking a truth without citing the authorities behind those truths.

Yet Jesus taught the Scripture without making reference to any other authority other than himself. So how can this be, since He has no diploma or certificate from any reputable seminary?

Jesus answered their question with v. 16.

Jesus would repeat this same theme over and over during His ministry

John 8:28 *So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me."*

John 12:49 *For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment – what to say and what to speak. 50 And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.*

The true disciple knows that he has much to learn and does not come into the lesson as if he had all of the answers and does not leave as if he has personally mastered it.

He will very generously share what Christ has taught him, but he will always acknowledge that everything he teaches come from Christ.

One preacher I read about said that when someone says, "That was a great sermon this morning," he replies, "Thanks, but it was a great text."

The church is full of people who claim to know Christ as Savior who have little or no knowledge of the things of God apart from their own salvation.

It is a very difficult thing for me to accept when I hear people who have been in church all their lives admit that they have so little knowledge of the truth and demonstrate no real desire to dig deep into the Word.

In fact, many church members shun the concept of doctrine altogether. They are satisfied with the shallow knowledge that they learned in children's Sunday School classes and with what they may hear in an adult class, but they have no desire to know the deep things of God.

The true disciple not only knows the doctrines of God, but he acknowledges that all that he has in the way of doctrine belongs to and comes from God.

II. God's Desire (v. 17)

For those who do not understand the things of God, Jesus explains in **verse 17** why it is that they do not or cannot understand those truths.

- For those outside of the kingdom – the unsaved...

Jesus is saying in this verse that coming to Him for salvation is not a matter of the intellect but of morality.

The only way that a person can come to know Christ as Lord is to want to know Him as Lord. The desire to know the will of God is the way into the kingdom. The lost person must come to a realization of who Christ is and then desire to follow after Him.

A.T. Robertson – Atheists of all types have no point of contact for approach to the knowledge of Christ. This fact does not prove the non-existence of God, but simply their own isolation. They are out of tune with the Infinite.

Agnostic and atheistic critics cannot come to a saving knowledge of Christ simply by way of knowledge. There must be a sincere desire of their will to know the will of God.

The reason an atheist cannot believe is because he has no true desire to come to know God for any other reason but the point of knowing.

Rejecting Christ as Lord and Savior is not so much about evidence as it is about will. The reason men cannot comprehend salvation is their deep-seated sense of rebellion against God.

But the point goes even farther.

- The verse also applies to those who are already in the kingdom.

A.T. Robertson – For those who love God it is also true that obedience to God's will brings richer knowledge of God.

In other words, Jesus is saying that the reason these Jewish leaders could not comprehend the doctrine of God was that they had no true desire to serve God.

The reason that those in the church struggle with complex doctrines is that they, in fact, have no desire to know them, for if they did, God may require something of them that they are not willing to give – like a lifetime of service. For them, ignorance is bliss.

This is not just true of religious knowledge, but it is also true of secular knowledge.

Many years ago during my teaching days, school systems began to teach what they called "character education." School systems realized that, although their task was to teach, "without sufficient character qualities in their students they are not able to educate them."

Basically, the school systems recognized what Jesus taught here: The act of doing brings the skill of knowing.

Jesus said, "I am the truth." And He taught things that are sometimes challenging to understand. But Jesus never meant for us to know more than we do.

Discipleship is more than education or learning, more than fellowship, and even more than Bible study.

THE LEAST YOU CAN DO

It is putting feet to our knowledge and being obedient to the commands of God. That is what Jesus meant in **verse 17** when he said, ***“If any man will do his will, he shall know...”***

The truth of Gods’ word becomes more and more readily apparent as we become more and more willing to live as God designed us to live.

(Share my missions experience.)

The act of doing brings the skill of knowing and understanding.

Mark 12:30 ...you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

Psalms 119:99 I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. 100 I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts.

One of the reasons church members struggle to understand the deeper things of theology is not that they are too difficult. It is because fully comprehending them requires that we be willing to know His will and to obey His commandments.

Jesus says in this verse that there is a reciprocal relationship between obedience and knowledge.

John 8:32 ...you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Knowing the truth means much more than just being faithful in worship and Bible study. Understanding the doctrine of God – those deep theological truths that tell us more and more about the God we serve – requires obedience.

Col. 1:9 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

THE LEAST YOU CAN DO

The true disciple of Christ has his heart set on God’s doctrine and God’s desire, and...

III. God’s Delight (v. 18)

John 8:50 ...I do not seek my own glory...

1 Cor. 10:31 So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Throughout His earthly ministry Jesus continually expressed that His purpose in all that He did was to give glory to God. He did not do all these miracles and teach these truths for the praise of man, but to call attention to the Father.

We are so spoiled as humans that, if we don’t get the recognition we feel we deserve for all of our efforts, we sulk and pout and complain and resign.

John Piper, *Experiencing God*

...we must learn from the Puritan pastor Richard Baxter (who died in 1691).... He prayed, “May the Living God, who is the portion and rest of the saints, make these our carnal minds so spiritual, and our earthly hearts so heavenly, that loving him, and *delighting in him, may be the work of our lives.*” When delighting in God is the work of our lives (which I call Christian Hedonism), there will be an inner strength for ministries of love to the very end.

The true disciple does everything that he does with the intention of glorifying God. He delights in the name and the purposes and the commandments of God. He loves God simply because He is God and is deserving of all of our praise and our obedience.

“The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

His heart’s desire is turned towards...

- God’s Doctrine
- God’s Desires
- God’s Delight